

April 8th, 2010

DR. MARTIN BECK
LEA COLLET

Civic Participation and Local Development: Building Effective Communities in Jordan

Event: Regional Workshop

Date/Place: April 8th, 2010,
Zarqa Chamber of Industry and Commerce

Concept: Dr. Khaled Awamleh, Dr. Martin Beck

Organization: KAS Amman, Visions Center For Strategic and Development Studies

1. Program Overview

Thursday, April 8th, 2010

Visions Center for Strategic
And Development Studies
Amman-Jordanien

Dr. Khaled Al Awamleh

Resident Representative of the
Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung

Dr. Martin Beck

Governor of Zarqa

HE Mr. Saad Al Manseer

Local Development Directorate
Ministry of Interior-Jordan

Dr. Raad Al Adwan

Chairman Board of Directors Member, Board
of Director, Jordan Chamber of Industry and
Commerce

Mr. Mohmmad Arsalan

First Session: Civic Participation in Local Communities

Basic concepts of Local Development
Planning

Dr. Jamal Al - Nsour
Head of Regional and Planning
Department, Ministry of Municipal Af-
fairs

The Role of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs
in the Decentralization Process in Jordan

Mr. Saleh Jaradat
Director, Head of Regional and Planning
Department, Ministry of Municipal
Affairs

How to Empower and to Run a
Municipality, A German Experience

Dr. Christoph Strünck
Professor of Political Sciences
University Siegen

Moderator

Dr. Raad Al Adwan
Local Development Directorate
Ministry of Interior-Jordan

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Seconded Session: Decentralization and Institutional Capacity Building for Local Administration

Local Community and Economic Development "Roles and Achievements"

Dr. Khaled Al Wazzani
Chairman of Darat Holding, Co.

The Industrial Sector in Zarqa City

Mr. Mohmmad Arsalan
Chairman Board of Directors Member,
Board of Director, Jordan Chamber of Industry

Decentralization and Local Public Media

Dr. Raad Al Adwan
Local Development Directorate
Ministry of Interior-Jordan

Moderator

Ms. Reem Obeidat
Senior Consultant/Trainer for Leadership
Development
Media Gender and Communication

Third Session: Public Media and local development in Jordan

Public Media and Social Responsibility

Ms. Reem Obeidat
Senior Consultant/Trainer for Leadership
Development
Media Gender and Communication

Media and Local Development in Jordan

Dr. Basim Al- Tweissi
Director of the Center of Studies and
Community Department. Al- Hussein Bin
Talal University, Ma'an Jordan

Moderator

Dr. Amjad Al- Kadi
Director und Manager
Audiovisual Commission

2. Objectives

With the first competitive elections in 1989 Jordan's late King Hussein paved the way for enhancing the political participation, which is a substantial component of a functioning political system. King Abdullah II initiated the first measures to improve the political, social and economic framework of a political and equal participation. He therefore founded a royal commission in 2005 to work out a decentralization plan for Jordan's political system. This plan officially aims at enhancing the political participation of citizens on the local community level, creating an open, transparent and citizen friendly political system and delegating power form

the highly centralized government bureaucracy to the governorate and community level. Though it is the main objective of the regime to stabilize the prevalent political order with its limited opportunities of political participation, Jordan's citizens should take the government by its word and should seize the chance of widening the civic participation.

During the workshop on April 8th, 2010, organized by KAS Amman and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies at the Zarqa chamber of industry and Commerce, 20 experts discussed with over 100 participants from the private, public

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and scientific sector the possibilities to improve the civic participation and the local development in building effective communities in Jordan in the context of the decentralization plan launched in 2005 by the government.

3. Details

The seconded part of the workshop on Civic Participation and Local Development was inaugurated by the Chairman of the Zarqa Chamber of Industry and Commerce, Mr. **Hussein Shraim**.

The governor of Zarqa Mr. **Saad Al Mansseer** welcomed the participants and the experts. In his opening speech he identified the private and public sector as key sectors to achieve a sustainable economic and social development. All members of society in Jordan should be regarded as responsible partners and integrated in the decision-making process to better determine the needs and priorities of the population. In the modern globalized world local development and civic participation are main tools to use the human capacity of the Jordanian society efficiently. Furthermore, the civic participation supports governmental programs and integrates the citizens in government activities.

Dr. Arsalan and **Mr. Adwan** identified the private and public sector as key sectors in the local development policies, too. **Dr. Arsalan** pointed out to the important role of the Zarqa Chamber of Industry and Commerce in educating and advanced training of students, employees and self-employed people.

Dr. Awamleh, director of the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies and **Dr. Beck**, Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung thanked the Ministry of Interior for its cooperation and expressed their hope for future joint events on decentralization. **Dr. Beck** pointed out that the workshop can be traced back to the promising initiative of King Abdullah II to decentralize the political decision-making

process in Jordan. However, this decentralization process should further enhance the capacities of municipalities and strengthen the participation on the local level. The government should therefore take measures to help citizens getting the opportunity to take part in decision-making processes and to implement their interests on the local level. Hence, the government has to provide the municipalities and governorates with the necessary financial means.

Both **Dr. Awamleh** and **Dr. Beck** stated that the KAS-Visions Center workshop is particularly important as it is the first coordinated effort between the government, represented by the directory of the local development at the ministry of interior, municipalities, local media departments, institutions of higher education and advocacy groups to organize a joint event on local development and civic participation in governorates and local communities.

Dr. Jamal Al-Nsour introduced the first session with a lecture on "Basic concepts of Local Development Planning". He depicted in five steps a possible model for development planning. First, data and expertise (geographic, demographic, socioeconomic and cultural) on governorates and local communities should be compiled. Then, internal and external financial resources should be acquired and administrative measures should be taken to decentralize the political system and to strengthen the local administrative and decision-making competences.

Mr. **Salah Jeredat**, Director of the Regional and Planning Department in the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, highlighted the difference between sustainable and local development. Sustainable development deals with the protection and preservation of resources for future generations. Local communities, for example, should safeguard their real estate against governmental actions in order to decide freely on the purpose of their landed

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property. In contrast, local development is a participatory effort aiming at integrating the citizens in the political decision-making process and improving the living standard of the society.

In this context, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs supports financially various projects on political participation and local development. The amount of the financial aid depends, however, on the efforts and merits of the governorates and local communities.

In the following, **Professor Christoph Strünck** lectured on the basic principles of the German civil society and underlined that self-government at local level is enshrined in Germany's constitutional law.

Germany has about 14.000 municipalities in which the citizens vote for a mayor, who is the representative of the people and the local public administration and their district representatives in the city. The two main tasks of the local government are to attract and keep businesses and to take care for needy people, since the municipalities predominantly provide public services in Germany. Hence, he talked about the main groups of the civil society, i.e. the associations, citizen groups, local political parties, local media and non-profit-organizations.

He then focused on citizen loans as a new source of local revenue: citizens lend money to the city and will get it back with a fixed interest rate. The city uses the money for example to refurbish schools.

The German experience shows clearly that through the decentralization of the political system the citizens can assert their right of participation and their preferences in the socioeconomic process.

At the beginning of the seconded session **Dr. Wazzani** remarked that every economic development is always a socioeconomic development in society. Since Jordan is neither an oil nor a cash economy, the government has to enhance its human resources i.e. to improve the labour market policy and to reduce poverty. In stabilizing economic priorities with the governorates

the government could promote actively local development policy strategies.

According to **Dr. Wazzani** the reciprocal aid among governorates constitutes a good basis for close cooperation in different areas.

Mr. **Arsalan** talked about Zarqa's role as an important economic and industrial hub in the country. Zarqa holds more than 50 % of factories in the Kingdom as well as some 18,000 licensed outlets which contribute to Zarqa's image as a profitable investment sector. Zarqa was hit, nonetheless, by the impacts of the international financial and economic crisis. That is why the government has to focus now on supporting the local government structures in the governorates and enhancing the civic participating of Jordan's citizens.

Therefore, the Chamber of Industry and Commerce plays a major role in bringing together people working in the private and in the public sector and contributing through numerous projects to the cooperation between the private sector and the civil society. In the future, the Chamber will work together closely with Jordan's universities to carry out studies on the priorities and needs of the citizens.

Dr. Al Adwan presented in his lecture on "Decentralization and Local Administration" the decentralization plan of the government. A new committee works since 2009 on compiling the financial, political, organizational and judicial framework for the implementation of the decentralization plan. The decentralization envisions a delegation of power, capacities and resources on the governmental and communal level. The capabilities and financial means of the 12 governorates have to be strengthened in such a way as to enable the civil society to participate at the political life of the state on all levels. The huge socioeconomic gap between the rural and urban population shows that the decisions of the government do not always reflect the needs and priorities of the citizens.

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Ms. **Reem Obeidat** opened the third session analyzing a picture of a young Jordanian street child, published in one of Jordan's newspapers, to discuss the communication methods of print media. She considered the fact that the media in Jordan does not report on social and humanitarian problems as problematic and said that this is the main reason why the media does not contribute to local development. Therefore, the media should be more open and improve its quality standards in reporting to serve as a real exchange platform for citizens. She added that the media plays a significant role in the decentralization process as a communication tool between the national administrative and the local level.

Dr. Al-Tweissi identified in this respect the media as a key tool in the local development policies and transformation process of the Jordanian society. The support of the local media in the different governorates should be a crucial task of the government in order to push for its reform measures and to bridge the gap between the north and the south and between the rural and the urban population in Jordan. The media is not only an indispensable connector between the public and the private sector, but it allows the citizens to participate actively in the decision-making process. To enhance transparency, accountability, to combat corruption and to diversify the economic structures, the infrastructure of the media has to improve significantly.

In the final discussion participants and experts commented on the role of the media in Jordan. Due to the tribal structures in society, some participants considered a socio-economic transformation through the influence of the new media as unrealistic.

The experts were of the opinion, that though the development of the local media is not fully accomplished yet, it plays a crucial role in the local development process.

4. Conclusion

As a first coordinated effort between the government, represented by the directory of the local development at the ministry of interior, municipalities, local media departments, institutions of higher education, advocacy groups, the joint workshop of the the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Visions Center for Strategic and Development Studies on civic participation and local development has paved the way for future discussions on decentralization.

The participation of the governor of Zarqa, Mr. **Saad Al Manseer**, as well as of other high ranking experts showed that political decision-makers in Jordan consider working on concepts of local development, civic participation and decentralization of the political system as highly important. The workshop fulfilled the function of bringing together experts from different sectors to discuss explosive topics such as the decentralization of power and financial resources in Jordan. The feedback in the workshop was positive. The participants enjoyed the opportunity of a free exchange of opinions on such rarely debated subjects. The lively contribution of the participants and experts clearly showed that there is a major interest in attending a following event and continuing the decentralization talks. The workshop was recorded by important Jordanian television channels as Jordan TV, JoStar, 7Stars und Nourmina TV ans was covered by famous daily newspapers such as al-Dustur and al-Ghad. Short comments and reports on the workshop can be also found on several websites as www.fananews.com, www.shbeebnews.net, [serajjnews.com](http://www.serajjnews.com) or www.albalqanews.net. An overview on the main articles can be found under http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_546-1442-1-30.pdf.